Tuesday, October 30. 2007

### An Open Letter to AWI Regarding AWTeen

I wrote this open letter to AWI regarding the current happenings in AWTeen. My point was not to comment on anyone's actions, but to encourage AWI not to write awteen off and to keep an open mind towards its future, along with providing some context and history of where I'm coming from. I figure this to be an appropriate venue to share it.

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Aloha,

My name is Eric Rosloff, citname Eric (formerly XelNaga), citnum 315650. I'm writing this letter to express my thoughts on the current situation that has befallen the world awteen, a community in which I was, some years ago, a very active member. In recent years I have used active worlds only sparsely, and as I am now 21 years old have no real remaining connection to awteen, save through those other citizens with whom I shared my time with back in the day.

I became active in awteen at 15 years old, and during my tenure there (remaining active within the world for about three years) I shuffled between several leadership roles, both official and unofficial. My time serving as a public representative, member of the core, and member of the council played a large role in building my confidence as a speaker and facilitator and gave me experience in working with (and dealing with) others in a context that I imagine few ever get the chance to be a part of at such a young age. I worked with others of different ages, backgrounds, and ideals in strive of facilitating the growth and direction of a community made up on a unique brand of teens.. those who for whatever reason sought connection through this online medium. The things I learned during that time proved invaluable for me when I went on to be a facilitator and organizer for communities I was involved in out in the "real world", especially as an example of an organization that was run by it's own members as opposed to the concrete hierarchies found in many typical institutions for youth.

The height of my involvement happened to be during a time, some years ago, when the teen community of active worlds was several hundred strong. The low price of citizenship (then $20) provided much greater access to teens, who often relied on the finances of parents or a slim allowance to fund online activities. During this boom time the existing structure of leadership in the world made significant changes to itself to adapt to raised demand. New positions and staffers were added, holding worldwide events (both major and minor) became a significant priority (and were generally well attended), and awteen ultimately evolved from another themed building world into a thriving worldwide community.

The change in citizenship price had a devastating effect on the teen community. When the price of using active worlds became more than an incidental expense, the number of teens (along with the population at large) dwindled significantly. In the time since then, awteen's population and activity has steadily decreased, and its institutions have shrunk along with it. Finally, it seems, it has reached the point where those institutions are unable to sustain themselves based on the current level of activity (or lack there of), and have faded out. I think this is natural and an acceptable reaction to the current situation, which leaves you at AWI with the question of what to do next.

Considering all of the above to be context, the point of this letter is to strongly encourage you at AWI to keep an open mind towards the future of awteen. I have always been a firm believer in the idea of a world "for teens, by teens", and as I am no longer a teen or member of the community, I do not seen it as the place of myself or other members of my "aw generation" to attempt to set up new structures based on experiences we had back in the day. I do, however, sincerely and strongly hope that you will be open and receptive to the developing needs and desires of this present teen community, and willing to accommodate them should they come to some cohesive decision about how they'd like to chart their future. I would also suggest aiding in the constructive development of this dialog, but perhaps it would be best left in their hands.

To conclude, being a part of the community of awteen made a serious positive impact in my life, and I hope that such opportunities remain available for teens of this new aw generation. Every community goes through ups and downs, periods of growth and periods of decline, even great changes and reformations. Please, whatever you decide to do, don't write awteen off. Thank you for taking the time to listen.

Regards,
Eric (315650)

Posted by Eric Rosloff in Commentary at 03:27

I don't know what else to say here except that this post is excellent. But it's not only Activeworlds, Inc. that has to keep an open mind, it's the community as well. To be honest, I am shocked that Activeworlds has even stayed with the world after all this - and that gives me hope for the future, should the community want to work toward it.

Anonymous on Oct 31 2007, 10:53